



The Dead Stroll*

Set in Louisville in the 1960s, Edward Mercer's first crime novel opens on Dixie Highway in an area known as "the Stroll." The clock rolls back to a time when the Star Gas Station at the corner of Dixie and Osage Avenue is bustling, long before it became the trash-strewn vacant lot that exists there now. Fort Knox soldiers look for action as prostitutes walk the streets, unaware they are being stalked by a serial killer. Tension builds throughout the story, fueled not only by the killer, but also by the racial conflicts of the 1960s. Police are the lightning rod for all the anger and violence spilling out of the black

community. Scott McAllister, a young police officer just beginning his career with the Louisville Division of Police, is rapidly introduced to the dangers and stresses of police work. He must adapt quickly to the violent world in which he now lives.

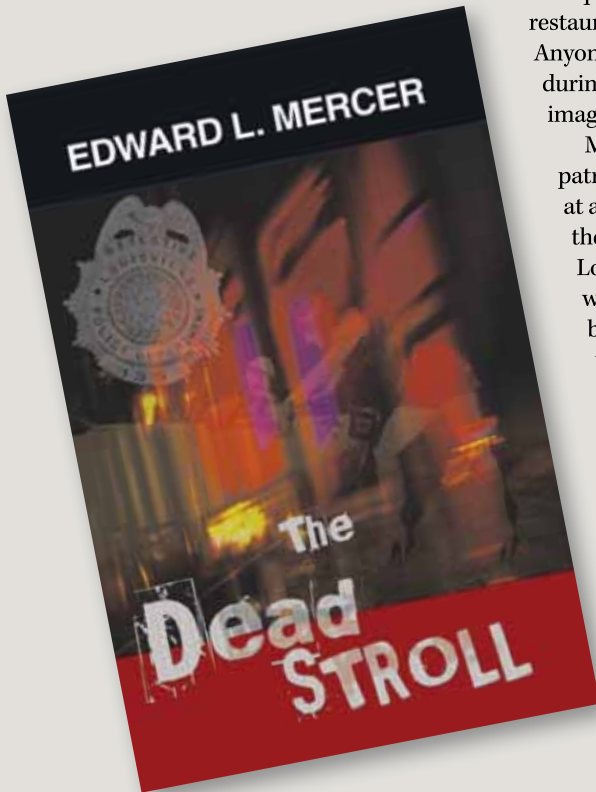
Mercer's keen insight into the lives and problems of police work is real. His résumé includes a long history with the Louisville Police Homicide Unit, eventually retiring as the chief of detectives. The story is filled with references to the day-to-day lives of patrol officers and detectives of LPD. The setting is completely accurate, from the references of the offices in LPD Headquarters to the streets and restaurants in Louisville in the 1960s. Anyone who spent time in Louisville during those days will feel the imagery come to life.

McAllister quickly learns the patrol officer's responsibilities at a homicide scene as he rides the tough neighborhoods of Louisville's west end. He works with good cops and bad, hard boiled and fearless along with cowardly and crooked. He tries to do his best, but is frustrated by a corrupt patrol sergeant and a system that seems to be designed to fail. Then McAllister meets homicide detective John Craig. Craig is experienced and reliable, and McAllister sees a ray of light in his future.

McAllister and Craig meet after work for a beer and Craig gives him the skinny on how politics flow inside the police department. He warns McAllister to watch his back, while encouraging him to set his sights on an assignment in homicide.

As the gruesome murders of prostitutes continue, the racial tensions of the civil rights era explode. Officers are targeted by race-baiting white hecklers and militant blacks. Black officers are hit the hardest, caught between angry black protesters, white hecklers and racist commanding officers. City hall is involved with corruption reaching into the highest levels. McAllister and Craig press on, juggling personal lives and relationships with the crushing pressure of the murder investigations. The action continues with twists and turns before coming to an exciting pinnacle.

As Mercer points out, the detectives worked without the tools cops today take for granted. No cell phones, in-car computers, word processors or DNA evidence. Shoe leather and the ability to get information from witnesses and informants is how homicide cases were solved. *The Dead Stroll* is a thrilling look inside a gritty homicide investigation. You will feel the steam of the hot summer night as you ride with McAllister in a big black Dodge police cruiser, minus air conditioning. Craig's long hours, political sure-footedness and underlying knowledge will keep you wound up in the story. It is a testament to the tenacity and hard work of the police officers and detectives everywhere. 🍷



*A fiction novel by Edward Mercer, AuthorHouse, Bloomington, Indiana, 2011